

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8 and 11-14 are pending in this application. Claims 9 and 10 were previously canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 1 has been amended to correct a typographical error and to make Claim 1 consistent with the stopping symbol language in previously presented Claim 14.

The outstanding Office Action indicates that Claims 1-8 and 11-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ozaki et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0031658, Ozaki) in view of Minoru (JP-08-173591).

Initially, it is noted that the request included in the Amendment filed July 8, 2006, for acknowledgement of the references included with the IDS filed on April 20, 2005, has not been answered in the outstanding Action. Accordingly, acknowledgement of consideration of the references included with the IDS filed on April 20, 2005, is again requested.

Turning to the outstanding rejection of Claims 1-8 and 11-14 over Ozaki in view of Minoru, this rejection is traversed because considering these references alone or together in any proper combination fails to demonstrate that they teach or suggest a conceal unit having an opening area and configured to temporarily conceal at least one of the plurality of displayed symbols and/or a rear side of the front side display unit during a progression of a game as required by base independent Claim 1.

The outstanding Action urges that although Ozaki does not teach or suggest temporarily concealing the display of the variable display unit, Minoru teaches a concealing unit having an opening area 13 (Fig. 5B) capable of temporarily concealing the display of the variable display unit (Fig. 5B; paragraph 0006) and (at the top of page 3) that the artisan would have replaced the conceal unit of Ozaki by the conceal unit of Minoru to facilitate

concentration on the game the player is playing by controlling the appearance of the variable display unit of Ozaki.

However, following the teachings and suggestions of Minoru to modify Ozaki does not lead to the claimed invention. In this respect, it is noted that Minoru discloses a slot machine comprising a shutter main body that opens and closes bonus lottery reel display windows (opening area) mounted on the slot machine. As shown in Fig. 1, the slot machine 11 has game reel display windows 12 and the bonus lottery reel display windows 13. A player can have visual contact with symbols mounted on periphery surfaces of reels (game reels), through the game reel display window 12. Also, the player can have visual contact with symbols mounted on periphery surfaces of sub-reels (bonus lottery reels) 3a and 3b, through the bonus lottery reel display windows 13.

As shown in Figs. 2 and 3, a bonus lottery reel unit 1 is incorporated into the slot machine 11 and comprises an outer frame 2, the sub-reels 3a and 3b, the shutter main body 4, a shutter motor 5, a shutter position detecting plate 6 and a photo detector 7. The outer frame 2 forms the entirety of the bonus lottery reel unit 1. A part of the sub-reels 3a, 3b is included in the outer frame 2.

The shutter main body 4 comprises a concealing plate 4a, a side plate 4b and a supporting portion 4c, and is rotatably supported on the sub-reels 3a and 3b through the supporting portion 4c. The concealing plate 4a is connected to the supporting portion 4c via the side plate 4b. Here, it should be noted that the concealing plate 4a does not have an opening area. The shutter motor 5 drives the shutter main body 4, and is supported on the sub-reels 3a and 3b so that a rotation axis of the shutter motor 5 matches a rotation axes 3c of the sub-reels 3a and 3b. The supporting portion 4c and the shutter position detecting plate 6 are supported on the rotation axis of the shutter motor 5 protruding from the outer frame 2. As shown in Fig. 4, the shutter position detecting plate 6 has a slit 6z which is used to detect

an open state or a close state of the shutter main body 4 and is mounted on a top periphery portion of the shutter position detecting plate 6. The photo detector 7 detects the slit 6a and is mounted on the top periphery portion of the shutter position detecting plate 6 (see paragraphs 0006 and 0011-0013).

In the above structure taught by Minoru, when a player plays a normal mode game in the slot machine 11, the player has visual contact with the symbols through the game reel display windows 12 and does not have visual contact with the symbols through the bonus lottery reel display windows 13 because the concealing plate 4a of the shutter main body 4 completely closes the bonus lottery reel display window 13. When a player plays a bonus lottery mode game in the slot machine 11, the shutter main body 4 rotates in a direction A (see Fig. 5). If the shutter main body 4 conceals the slit 6a, the shutter motor 5 stops the shutter main body 4 because the photo detector 7 does not detect the slit 6a and then the player has visual contact with the symbols through the bonus lottery reel display windows 13. When a player loses in the bonus lottery mode game, the shutter main body 4 rotates in a direction B (see Fig. 6). If the shutter main body 4 does not conceal the slit 6a, the shutter motor 5 stops the shutter main body 4 because the photo detector 7 detects the slit 6a and then the player does not have visual contact with the symbols through the bonus lottery reel display windows 13 (see paragraphs 0015-0021). Therefore, if the concealing plate 4a were to include an opening area, the shutter main body 4 cannot completely close the bonus lottery reel display windows 13 when a player plays the normal mode game or loses in the bonus lottery mode game. This is clearly contrary to the teachings of Minoru.

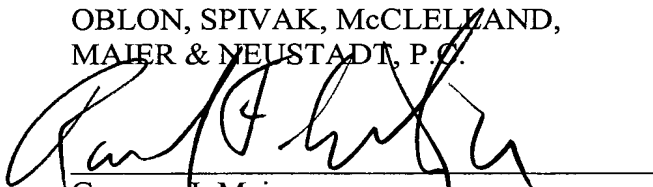
On the other hand, the present invention provides a gaming apparatus comprises an LCD shutter 502' having a prescribed open area 3' or a film 520 having a hole 530. The LCD shutter 502' and the film 520 can temporarily conceal at least one of the display symbols on the reels 3L, 3C, 3R and/or a rear side of the images for entertainment displayed

on the LCD panel 501 (see page 15, line 26 – page 16, line 26 – page 17, line 3 and FIGS. 39, 40, 42B, for example). Therefore, as compared to Minoru, the present invention includes the “concealing unit” of Claim 1 that has “an opening area, located between the variable display unit and the front side display unit” that can “temporarily conceal at least one of the plurality of symbols displayed by the variable display unit and/or a rear side of the front side display unit during a progression of a game.

As no other issues are believed to remain outstanding relative to this application, it is believed to be clear that this application is in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable action to this effect is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,  
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier  
Attorney of Record  
Registration No. 25,599

Customer Number  
**22850**

Tel: (703) 413-3000  
Fax: (703) 413 -2220  
(OSMMN 06/04)

Raymond F. Cardillo, Jr.  
Registration No. 40,440